
From: Kennedy, David <dkennedy@unitedwaycfc.org>
Sent: Monday, February 18, 2013 10:30 AM
To: AppropriationTestimony
Subject: Testimony - Commission on Children As Part of Commission on Citizen Advocacy - Public Hearing of 2/19/13
Attachments: image001.jpg; image002.jpg

Dear Senator Harp, Representative Walker, and Distinguished Members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is David Kennedy and I serve as Chief Operating Officer for United Way of Coastal Fairfield County. I also serve as a member of the Achievement Gap Task Force created under PA 11-85. I write with regard to the proposed plan to consolidate certain legislative commissions. (I am sorry that I cannot be present on 2/19/13 to deliver these remarks in person.)

In particular, I write with regard to my concern for the impact that this proposal may have on the ongoing work of the Commission on Children, work which is so clearly rooted to date in successful RBA outcomes and measurements.

My career in the Human Services field in Connecticut spans over 3 decades and includes not only work for United Way but also includes service as a CT municipal Human Services department head. During those years, I have been an active part of at least 5 mergers and/or consolidations of departments and agencies. Generally, I am very supportive of those efforts and have seen great outcomes from them.

But first hand experience – and research – also tells me that not all consolidations are the best for the delivery of services – and in this instance, I am concerned about how the consolidation will impact the plethora of services that the Commission on Children delivers and the expanded role that it has in Connecticut.

As you know, the Commission's track record has few equals in our country – and our State is clearly better today because of its work. The February 2013 document *The Commission on Children at the Cutting Edge* catalogs that well. I personally recall with fondness the creation of the Commission in the mid 1980's and Laura Lee Simon's tireless work on that effort and her vision for the Commission - and I have watched with pride its development and interacted often with the Commission as a professional since its creation. It has promoted public policies in the best interest of children – and helped our State Government to put those policies in place, and monitor their effectiveness.

Meeting the needs of children in our state and having research based, best-practice policies that make that possible are essential for the future economic growth and stability of our State. Without them, closing the Academic Achievement Gap – and the Opportunity Gap – in Connecticut is just not possible. *Focus on this work takes laser precise interventions and planning.* Experience certainly suggests that the Commission on Children has been able to help the General Assembly and our State do exactly that.

As a side bar, of sorts, kudos to the Governor for the recently proposed Office of Early Childhood. What a bold and innovative plan - which I understand, interestingly, has roots in work done by the Commission on Children as it collaborated with others to develop the early childhood system bill that eventually led to the Office of Early Childhood proposal and which has developed over time some of the key components that will now allow the Office to be successful including having engaged and trained parents and a systems integration of home visitation and early care and education.

I don't pretend to be an expert on the five legislative commissions that are proposed to be consolidated into the Commission on Citizen Advocacy. And I am not wise enough to know if doing so is the "absolute best thing to do."

I am simply *concerned* that reducing the Commission on Children to being a part of the Commission on Citizen Advocacy may mean less attention to the development of needed policy to improve the lives of children in our state - from pre-natal to young adulthood - and in turn to close our Achievement and Opportunity Gaps.

In short, please, tread carefully and wisely. Children's futures – especially the vulnerable – hang in the balance.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Sincerely,

David

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